

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

November 16, 2012

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

1404

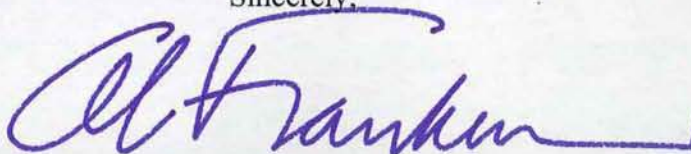
Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to ask that you finalize reforms to the Universal Service Rural Health Care Fund proposed on July 15, 2010 that would make skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) eligible for rural health care support. As the nation moves towards using health information technology to improve quality and lower costs, rural Americans must not get left behind.

Skilled nursing facilities are an especially important care provider in rural areas—nearly one-third of all skilled nursing facilities are located in rural areas. Your 2010 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking recognized that in rural areas, advances in telemedicine have empowered SNFs to treat patients quickly and at lower cost, because patients no longer have to be transferred to hospitals for treatment. For this reason, in 2010, you proposed that SNFs be eligible for rural health care support through the Universal Service Rural Health Care Fund.

However, more than two years later, this rule has yet to be finalized. Despite their potential to provide high-quality, low-cost care in rural areas, SNFs remain ineligible for help obtaining broadband connectivity. Your proposed rule could help rural health providers connect to the 21st century, and I respectfully ask that you finalize this rule as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration of this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Al Franken", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Al Franken
United States Senator



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

March 8, 2013

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Franken:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Universal Service Rural Health Care Fund. I appreciate your interest in this matter and am pleased to provide the enclosed letter on this issue from the Chief of the Wireline Competition Bureau's Telecommunications Access Policy Division.

If you have any additional questions or need any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal stroke that extends to the right.

Julius Genachowski

Enclosure



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

March 8, 2013

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Franken:

Thank you for your letter expressing your support for the Commission's 2010 proposal to make skilled nursing facilities eligible for rural health care support.

On December 21, 2012, the Commission adopted the *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*, which launched the new Healthcare Connect Fund to expand health care provider access to broadband services and foster state and regional broadband health care networks. In addition, the Commission created a new Skilled Nursing Facilities Pilot Program, which will be implemented in 2014. This program will test how to support broadband connections for skilled nursing facilities. The Commission has approved up to \$50 million over a three-year period for the pilot program. The text of the Order can be found on the Commission's website at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-12-150A1.doc

Thank you for your interest in this important matter, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kimberly A. Scardino", is written over the typed name.

Kimberly A. Scardino
Acting Chief
Telecommunications Access Policy Division
Wireline Competition Bureau